

Michael E. Christensen, Ph.D.  
Email: prof.chris@comcast.net  
Home phone: 801-253-1890  
Office phone: 801-538-1032

**Political Science 311-001**  
**Spring Semester 2009**  
**TTh 6:00PM – 8:30 PM**  
**Room 208 SWKT**

**I. Course Overview**

Most of us know more about our national government than our state and local governments. The national media almost imposes the daily activities of the nation's president on our lives. But the actions of our governors and state legislatures are covered less extensively. And the daily work of our mayors, city and county councils, school district board members even less so. Yet these state and local government officials impact our lives enormously. They tax us and thereby provide schools, roads, parks, water systems, and electrical power. They police our streets and neighborhoods, settle most of our court cases and incarcerate over 90 percent of all prisoners. They put out our fires, pick up our garbage, regulate our businesses and decide how we can use our land.

Given the broad reach and impact of state and local governments, it is to our advantage to understand them better. This course is designed to help students develop a clearer understanding of their state and local governments. In this course, we will discuss the diversity of the fifty states and how that impacts governing. We will look at governors, legislatures and state courts. We will discuss grassroots participation, the influence of interest groups, and the role of political parties. We cover specific public policy issues such as: education, health care, social welfare, public safety, transportation, environment, and economic development. Finally, we will discuss the challenge of governing in these fast changing times and make a case for the wonder of representative democracy.

**II. Class Dates**

April	28	Class introduction Chapter 1: Face-to-Face Governance Chapter 2: State Diversity, Growth, and Decline, and the Contemporary Urban Dilemma
	30	Chapter 3: Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations Chapter 4: Constitutions and Charters
May	05	Chapter 5: Policy-Making Processes Chapter 6: Grassroots Participation

- 07 Chapter 7: Interest Groups  
Chapter 8: Political Parties and Elections  
Review for Midterm exam
- 12 **Mid Term Exam (Chapters 1-8 of text)**
- 14 Chapter 9: Governors  
Chapter 10: State Legislatures
- 19 Chapter 11: Local Government Executives and Legislatures  
Chapter 12: Bureaucracies
- 21 Chapter 13: Courts  
Chapter 14: Crime and Corrections
- 26 *Founding Brothers* – Class discussion and hand in book review
- 28 Chapter 15: Educational Policy  
Chapter 16: Social Welfare and Health Policy
- June 02 Chapter 17: Environmental Policy and Economic Development  
Chapter 18 Fiscal Policy and Financial Management  
Review for Final exam
- 04 *Too Close To Call* – Class discussion and hand in book review
- 19 **Guest Lecture: The Honorable Rebecca Lockhart, Utah House of Representatives**
- 11 **Guest Lecture: The Honorable Lynn W. Davis, Fourth District Court, State of Utah**
- 18 **Final Exam, Chapters 14-19**

### III. Books, Tests and Other Important Information

**Books:** There are three books for the class.

Dennis Dresang and James Gosling, *Politics and Policy in American States and Communities*, (Pearson Education, Inc. 2007). This is the textbook, and book we will cover chapter by chapter during the semester. The authors begin by “Laying the Foundation” of the American political system, then discuss ways people can and do participate in the political process. The authors then treat the “Institution of State and Local Governments” and end with an overview of the “Public Policies” facing state and local governments.

Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (Vintage Books 2000). This is a splendid book about the founders of our nation. It describes how a group of very bright and gifted but very human individuals miraculously established a nation against great odds. A book review is required on the date the book is discussed in class.

Jeffrey Toobin, *Too Close To Call*, (Random House, 2001) This book is about the 36-day battle in Florida to count the votes in the 2000 presidential election, most unusual and controversial election in American history. A book review is required on the date the book is discussed in class.

#### Lectures and Class Discussions

All lectures and class discussions on the chapters in *Politics and Policy in American States and Communities* and *Republic On Trial* are presented in PowerPoint and will be available on the BYU Blackboard This allows students to have access to the essence of each lecture. Students may want to print out the PowerPoint presentation and bring it to class and just add their notes to the PowerPoint presentation.

#### Tests

Both tests are a combination of fill-in-the-blank or short answer essays. You are expected to take the tests as scheduled. If circumstances prevent this, and you notify me ahead of the scheduled test, arrangements can be made for a different test time without penalty. Any student missing the test on the scheduled date and who has not notified me ahead of the test may still take a make-up test within a week, but will be penalized 15 percent. No test may be made up after a week has passed.

Grades are based on a straight line scale: 90% and above is an A; 80-89% is a B; 70-79% is a C; 60-69% is a D; and 59% and below is an E. Minor adjustments to this policy may be made based on overall class performance.

### **Writing Assignments**

Students are required to write a book review of both *Founding Brothers* and *Too Close To Call*. The review is to be no more than three pages long - double-spaced type. The review should explain the authors' thesis, purpose in writing the book, their main points and your evaluation of how well they did in making their case. The book reviews are due on the dates noted in the syllabus. Reviews handed in 1-7 days late will be docked 20 percent. No reviews will be accepted after seven days.

### **Extra Credit and Attendance**

There will be no extra credit reports, papers, etc. However, I take attendance and will give each student who misses no classes points equal to four percent of the total points possible.

### **Contacting the Professor**

I am an adjunct professor and therefore have no campus office or phone. However, I want to be available and accessible. I encourage you to **email** me when you have questions or concerns and I will respond quickly, usually within 24 hours. You can also call me at my home anytime. If I am not there (which is usually the case) leave me a message and I will call you back, usually that evening when I get home from work. If all else fails, you may call me at work, but I prefer to have this as a last option. If you miss class, I strongly encourage you to contact me as soon as possible to see what you missed. Since my work sometimes forces me to change the agenda at short notice, consistent attendance or immediate contact with me after missing a class is to your definite advantage.